



JUSTIN LUBIN/LIONSGATE/AP PHOTO

This undated publicity film image from Lionsgate shows John Dugan, left, as Grandpa Sawyer, and Bill Moseley, center, as Drayton Sawyer, in a scene from "Texas Chainsaw 3-D."

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Watching "Texas Chainsaw 3-D," the latest screen incarnation of the iconic chainsaw-wielding maniac Leatherface, the mind fairly reels. This purported direct sequel to Tobe Hooper's 1974 horror classic cheerfully ignores that director's own 1986 follow-up, the 1997 and 2003 remakes, the 2006 prequel and even its basic timeline. It scores points for sheer brazenness.

But aside from its being an obviously loving homage to the original - even including 3-D-enhanced clips from it in the opening credits - there isn't much to recommend this installment whose main point of originality is omitting the word "Massacre" from the title.

The opening sequence takes place directly after the final scene of Hooper's film, depicting a Waco-like encounter in which the house containing Leatherface and his cannibalistic family burns to the ground with all its occupants presumably dead. Except for a baby, who is promptly adopted and, as we soon see, grows up in Oklahoma to be the beautiful Heather (Alexandra Daddario).

Cut to roughly twenty years later, when Heather learns of her origins after being left a Texas mansion by her late grandmother. She and her friends promptly head off in a van to check out her inheritance which, unbeknownst to them, is still the home of the hulking Leatherface (Dan Yeager).

The film's first half follows conventional horror movie tropes as the heroine and her hottie companions - boyfriend Ryan (rapper Tremaine `Trey Songz' Neverson), BFF Nikki (Tania Raymonde), her new crush Kenny (Keram Malicki-Sanchez) and a hunky hitchhiker (Scott Eastwood) - are pursued by the chainsaw-wielding inhabitant with predictably lethal results. But not before all of them bare as much skin as possible.

Things take a somewhat more complex turn later on when Heather finds herself in an unlikely alliance with her deranged relative against the town's corrupt mayor (Paul Rae) and his minions. Leatherface is even given a rather sympathetic treatment, depicted as being something of a misunderstood, overgrown child whose propensity for tearing off his victims' faces is but an extreme example of adolescent rebellion.

That the film obviously takes place in the present day - a key sequence involves a camera phone - is something of a puzzler, since that would make Heather nearly forty, something that the tightly toned, midriff-baring Daddario is clearly not. But hey, what's a couple of decades more or less? Director John Luessenhop ("Takers") takes advantage of the 3-D by shoving blood spurts and the occasional chainsaw directly into viewers' faces, but otherwise it has little impact other than to goose the box-office with those hefty surcharges.

Unlike the restrained 1974 film which cleverly relied mainly on suggestion, this version piles on the graphic, often CGI-enhanced gore.

Devoted fans of the original will be gratified by the cameos from several of that film's cast members, including original Leatherface Gunnar Hansen, although they are mostly of the blink and you'll miss them variety. "Texas Chainsaw 3-D," a Lionsgate release, is rated R for strong grisly violence and language throughout. 92 minutes.